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ABSTRACT

This study examined literature coverage of issues related to ethnic and cultural minorities in two publications in the field of special education: "Exceptional Children" and "Teaching Exceptional Children." Leadership personnel within the Council for Exceptional Children (n=76) were surveyed concerning their opinions of multicultural content in the two journals. Results indicated that the 40 respondents felt the amount of minority coverage in both journals was inadequate. The respondents also perceived that the amount of coverage varied by group (Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Alaskan Native/Native Canadian). An analysis of the content of the publications from 1985-1987 was also undertaken, which involved counting each occurrence of terms related to ethnic and multicultural concerns. Findings suggested that there were relatively few occurrences of the terms. "Teaching Exceptional Children" had very limited coverage of the topic. In "Exceptional Children," approximately 68 percent of the occurrences were related to Blacks and 24.5 percent were related to Hispanics. The remaining 7.5 percent of the occurrences were distributed among Asians (4%), American Indians (2.5%), and Pacific Islanders (1%). Terms related to Alaskan Natives/Native Canadians did not occur. (JDD)

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Perceptions of Ethnic and Multicultural Content in Two Major Journals Related to Exceptional Children

A Report to the Minorities Committee
of the Council for Exceptional Children
Fall 1988

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Perceptions of Ethnic and Multicultural Content in Two Major Journals Related to Exceptional Children

The culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse population of the United States is increasing at a very rapid rate. Baca (1984) reports projection figures for the non-English-speaking population in the United States growing from 28 million in 1976 to nearly 40 million by the year 2000. The increase in this population will be reflected in larger numbers of students with culturally diverse backgrounds in all areas of education, including special education.

Providing appropriate services to the culturally diverse students currently enrolled in special education is a tremendous challenge to special educators. This challenge will intensify as the population continues to increase. Questions on providing appropriate services to culturally diverse students, that are currently being asked, are increasing at what appears to be a faster rate than the answers. A typical response to educators' questions about "issues," such as those related to cultural diversity, is to refer the individual making the request to the "literature." In the area of providing appropriate services to culturally diverse special education students this approach may be problematic.

The Research Problem

In light of the typical pattern, of referring the educator to the "literature," a study was conducted to determine the actual content on minority students in two special education journals as well as the perceptions of special education leadership personnel toward the amount of the coverage.

The study consisted of two parts. The first part of the study was designed to survey leadership personnel within the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) on their opinions of multicultural content in Exceptional Children and in Teaching Exceptional Children. This part of the study included the development of a survey instrument and the mailing of the instrument to Governors and Executive Board members of CEC. (See Appendix A.)

The second part of the study, which was carried out concurrent with the survey, was an analysis of the actual multicultural content in these journals. In order to provide objective data a list of specific terms was developed (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.) and the number of times each of these terms occurred was recorded.

The two major special education journals, Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children, were selected for study because they are provided to each member of the Council for Exceptional Children and are available in university, school and

institutional libaries, and consequently have a large readership. They were also selected because they represent a broad array of coverage in the area of exceptional individuals. In the interest of recency and of representativeness, the issues of the journals published in 1985, 1986, and 1987 were included in this study.

The Subjects

Surveys were mailed to 76 Governors and Executive Board members of CEC. There were 40 respondents (53 %) to the survey. The respondents represented a group with a great deal of experience in special education. The responses to an item on years of membership indicated that the respondents had been members from between 9 to 39 years with an average of 17.5 years of membership. Since this group represented leadership levels at the state and national level this finding was expected.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they were white. Only two indicated that they had a minority background. One respondent indicated that he/she was Black and one indicated that he/she was American Indian. The respondents were also asked to indicate if they were currently working with ethnic/cultural minority students. The majority, 28 (70%), indicated that they were currently working with minority students.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the CEC divisions to which he or she belonged. The majority indicated that they belonged to several divisions ranging from the Division of Learning Disabilities to the Division for Research. Table 1 shows the respondents membership in the various CEC divisions.

Table 1
Respondents Membership in CEC Divisions

Division	Membership
Administrators (CASE)	35%
Learning Disabilities (DLD)	35
Mental Retardation (CEC-MR).	28
Teacher Education (TED)	25
Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)	18
Early Childhood (DEC)	18
Career Development (DCD)	12
Physically Handicapped (DPH)	10
Communication Disorders (DCCD)	8
Gifted (TAG)	8
Technology and Media (TAM)	8
Educational Diagnostic Services (CEDS)	5
Research (CEC-DR)	3

Respondents Perceptions of Publications Content

The respondents, Governors and Executive Board members of CEC, were asked to indicate their perceptions of the amount of multicultural content in Exceptional Children and in Teaching Exceptional Children. The researchers selected the CEC leadership group because it was felt that the years of membership and the responsibilities of the offices held by individuals in this group was an indication of serious commitment to the field of special education and that this group would be interested in and sensitive to the content of the CEC publications under study. The respondents were asked to indicate, in their opinion, whether the coverage of ethnic and multicultural concerns in Exceptional Children and in Teaching Exceptional Children for the years 1985, 1986, and 1987 was "too little", "about right" or "too much" as related to Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, Alaskan Natives/Native Canadians, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. The mean responses related to the coverage of minority concerns in Exceptional Children on a five point scale (1 = too little, 3 = about right, 5 = too much) ranged from a high of 2.4 for Blacks to a low of 1.6 for Alaskan Native/Native Canadian. There were a few respondents who did not express an opinion or who omitted one or more responses on the survey. Table 2 shows the responses related to the amount of coverage of the selected groups.

Table 2
Respondents Opinion of Minority Coverage
in Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987

Group	Mean Response
Black	2.4
Hispanics	2.0
American Indian	1.9
Asian	1.9
Pacific Islander	1.7
Alaskan Native/Native Canadian	1.6

It is clear that in no case did the mean response indicate that the coverage was "about right" or "too much". It is also clear that a perception exists that the amount of coverage varies by groups.

The mean responses related to Teaching Exceptional Children on a five point scale (1 = too little, 3 = about right, 5 = too much) ranged from a high of 2.4 for Blacks to a low of 1.8 for Pacific Islander. Table 3 shows the mean responses of the respondents opinions of the amount of coverage of the selected groups.

Table 3
Respondents Opinion of Minority Coverage
in Teaching Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987

Group	Mean Response
Black	2.4
Hispanics	2.2
American Indian	2.0
Asian	1.9
Pacific Islander	1.8
Alaskan Native/Native Canadian	2.0

As was the case with Exceptional Children, it is clear that in no case did the mean response indicate that the coverage was "about right" or "too much" in Teaching Exceptional Children. It is also clear that, in Teaching Exceptional Children as well as in Exceptional Children a perception exists that the amount of coverage varies by groups.

Quantitative Analysis of Publications

In addition to the survey of the perceptions of special education leadership personnel about the multicultural content of the publications selected for study an analysis of the content of those publications was undertaken. The researchers decided that in order to provide an objective view of the content a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach would be used. The researchers hypothesized that if an article contained content related to ethnic and multicultural concerns that terms such as "Black", "Hispanic", "American Indian" or some other equivalent term would appear in the article and that these terms could then be counted. The following terms were selected for this study: Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native/Native Canadian, Asian, and Pacific Islander. A recording form was developed to record each occurrence of the selected terms in the articles appearing in the 1985, 1986 and 1987 issues of Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children. (See Appendix B.)

The occurrence of the selected terms was infrequent in Exceptional Children and almost nonexistent in Teaching Exceptional Children over the 3 year time period studied. There were 236 occurrences of the selected terms in Exceptional Children over the three year period. Table 4 shows the number of occurrences of the selected terms.

Table 4
Occurrence of Selected Terms
in Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987

Term	Occurrence
Black	160
Hispanics	58
American Indian	6
Asian	10
Pacific Islander	2
Alaskan Native/Native Canadian	0

The occurrence of the selected terms in Teaching Exceptional Children was very limited. In the three year time period the selected terms appeared only 10 times. Table 5 shows the number of occurrences of the selected terms.

Table 5
Occurrence of Selected Terms in Teaching
Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987

Term	Occurrence
Black	1
Hispanics	5
American Indian	2
Asian	2
Pacific Islander	0
Alaskan Native/Native Canadian	0

In addition to the selected terms a few related terms were encountered. A few references of a general nature such as "minority students," "ethnic groups," "bilingual child," etc., occurred in the publications; but, even these terms were infrequent.

Conclusions

This study was concerned with the coverage of issues related to ethnic and cultural minorities in two of the most widely read publications in the field of special education; Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children. One facet of the study included a survey of the perceptions of leadership personnel in the Council for Exceptional Children about the amount of multicultural coverage in these CEC publications. The second facet of the study involved counting the occurrence of selected terms related to multicultural content in these CEC publications.

The findings of this study are indicative of a number of areas which merit further research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of leadership personnel in the field of special education toward the coverage of minority issues in the two major special education publications and to analyze the amount of content related to minority issues in an objective manner. The findings, related to the survey, suggest that the respondents, in general, feel that the coverage of ethnic and multicultural concerns is not adequate. The mean responses on a five point scale related to the coverage in both Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children were below the "about right" (3.0) category. The mean responses ranged from a high of 2.4 for content related to Blacks on both publications to a low of 1.6 for Alaskan Native/Native Canadian on Exceptional Children. It should be emphasized that the number of respondents, although small, does represent about half of the governors and executive board members of CEC. This group has demonstrated serious commitment, interest, sensitivity, and leadership to the field of special education and the literature in the area.

The findings related to the content analysis of the selected publications suggest that there are relatively few occurrences of the terms related to the groups selected for this study. In addition to the small number of occurrences of the terms in Exceptional Children it is important to point out that approximately 68%, 160 of 236, of the occurences were related to Blacks and that approximately 24.5%, 58 of 236, of the occurrences were related to Hispanics. The remaining 7.5% of the occurrences in Exceptional Children were distributed among Asians (4%), American Indians (2.5%), and Pacific Islanders (1%). Terms related to Alaskan Natives/Native Canadians did not occur. Another factor that should be considered is that the occurrences were not evenly distributed across the three year time period of the study. In some cases the majority of the occurrences were within a particular article.

The coverage of multicultural content in Teaching Exceptional Children appears more limited than that in Exceptional Children. Only 10 occurrences of the selected terms were found in Teaching Exceptional Children which is indicative of very limited coverage of the topic.

A general conclusion related to the present study is that while the survey respondents feel that the coverage of ethnic and multicultural topics and concerns in the selected publications is slightly less than adequate, as indicated by their responses to the survey, an analysis of the content of the publications indicates that the coverage is exceedingly limited when analyzed by counting the number of occurrences of what can be described as key

indicators of multicultural content. The question of how much coverage can be considered "adequate" must be considered from a number of perspectives. In the publications area, the question of adequacy must be addressed not only from the perspective of the quantity of the content but also from the perspective of the quality of the content. In addition to the quantity and quality issues, questions of adequacy must be addressed from the perspective of the scope of the publications and the needs of the readers.

The findings in the present study indicate (1) the respondents feel that the coverage of multicultural issues is less than adequate, (2) the analysis of the content indicates very few occurrences of key indicators of multicultural content, and (3) the majority of the respondents in this study indicated that they are currently serving minority group students. The position of the researchers, based on the findings of this study is that the amount of coverage of multicultural issues is not adequate.

The following general recommendations are made for the purpose of ensuring that the content in special education publications with broad readership meet the perceived needs of special educators working with diverse populations: (1) a study or series of studies on the qualitative aspects of the coverage of ethnic and multicultural concerns using a broader research base should be undertaken to determine the quality of the content, (2) more content related to minority groups needs to be included in the publications, (3) members of minority groups should be encouraged to submit articles for publication, and (4) content in articles of general interest should reflect minority, as well as majority concerns.

Reference

Baca, L. M., & Cervantes, H. (1984). The bilingual special education interface. St. Louis: Times Mirror/Mosby

Appendix A

CEC ETHNIC AND MULTICULTURAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE
Publications Task Force - Survey 1988

This survey is designed to elicit your opinion about the representation of ethnic and multicultural concerns in EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN and TEACHING EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN. All responses to this questionaire will be kept confidential.

Please complete all of the following items.

1. Number of years you have been a member of CEC _____.

2. Male _____ Female _____.

3. Divisions you belong to 1._____, 2._____, 3._____

4. Your background: _____Alaskan Native/Native Canadian, _____American Indian, _____Asian, _____Black, _____Hispanic, _____Pacific Islander, _____White.

5. Do you currently work with ethnic/multicultural students?

_____Yes _____No

6. What is your opinion about the coverage of ethnic and multicultural concerns in Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987? (circle the number that best expresses your opinion)

GROUP	Too Little		About Right		Too Much
Black	1	2	3	4	5
American Indian	1	2	3	4	5
Alaskan Native/ Native Canadian	1	2	3	4	5
Hispanic	1	2	3	4	5
Asian	1	2	3	4	5
Pacific Islander	1	2	3	4	5

7. What is your opinion about the coverage of ethnic and multicultural concerns in Teaching Exceptional Children for 1985, 1986, 1987? (circle the number that best expresses your opinion)

GROUP	Too Little		About Right		Too Much
Black	1	2	3	4	5
American Indian	1	2	3	4	5
Alaskan Native/ Native Canadian	1	2	3	4	5
Hispanic	1	2	3	4	5
Asian	1	2	3	4	5
Pacific Islander	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

CEC Ethnic and Multicultural Committee
Publications Task Force - 1988

PUBLICATIONS ANALYSIS FORM

Reviewer Name_____ Date_____

Publication Title:
Date: Volume: Number:
Article Title:

Frequency of Occurance

Page	Black	American Indian	Alaskan Native, Native Canadian	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander